MAYANDAL

Folk Deity of Women's Concerns

Karnataka Tulu Sahithya Academy

A Page from the Publisher
A note of Academy President

Every Land has a unique treasure of knowledge. As such our TULUNADU too has many and many varieties of knowledge springs. It has a unique culture in every walks of life of an individual and the society. One of those vivid and variety culture is the 'Daivaradhana' (worship of Deities).

There are a lots of Daivas and its stories in this Alupakheda which is stored on Pardanas (Tulu Ballad farm). The accumulation of aesthetic beauty of language excelled through the narrative form. The Daiva's stories should be transformed to next generation as is in original form (as pardana) or at least in form of written stories. Anyhow in written media, now a days more formal one to reach out our young generation.

Tulu Academy perform its duties to conserve and transmit the Tulu culture by documentation and publishing the relevant one. One of those activities is to reach out to Tuluvas at abroad or outside of Tulunadu. There are thousands of Daivas, who receive highest respect and Pooja (Nema, Tambila & Kola) at the land. Each Daiva's has its own origin and Power the karnika. There are many Male and Female Daivas exists throughout Tulu region.

I feel proud to bring out Mayandal a Folk diets of Women's concern a translated form of our earlier published Tulu version which is documented by Smt. Yashavanthi Suvarna. Mr. S.N.D. Poojary tried his best to translate the story of 'Mayandal' Daiva, which may ignite the spirit of translation among others to English about other Daivas; so that our young and interested one can understand Daivas better. I appreciate Mr. S.N.D. Poojary for his special showed towards our published Daivas story interest. The Daivas stories not only say about it but also brings out Folk culture and life style at the past too.

I hope the readers welcome our venture.

ತುಳುನಾಡ್ದ, ತುಳು ಮಣ್ಣ್‌ದ ಕಮ್ಮೆನ ಊರೊರ್ಮೆ ಪಸೆರ್ದ್, ಅಯ್ತ ಭಾಸೆ, ಸಂಸ್ಕೃತಿದ ಪೊಲಬು ಪಡೆಯರೆಗ್ ಅನುವು ಮಲ್ತ್ ಕೊರ್ಪಿನ; ಇಂಚಿನ ಪುಣೆಪ್ಪು ಚಾಂಬ್ (ದುಡಿವ ಪ್ರಯತ್ನ) ಬೊಕ್ಕಲಾ ಆತ್ ಆವೊಡು. ಏರೆಗ್ ತುಳುತ ಬದುಕುನ್ ನನೊರಿಯಗ್ ತೆರಿಪಾವುನ ಅಂಗ್ ಉಂಡ, ಅಕುಲ್ ವಿಶೇಷವಾದ್ ಇಂಗ್ಲೀಷ್ ಭಾಸೆಗ್ ಅನುವಾದ ಮಲ್ಪುನ ಕಾಯಕೊಗು ದುಂಬೆತ್ತಡ್. ಅಕ್ಲೆಗ್ ಅಕಾಡೆಮಿದ ಬೊಕ್ಕ ತುಳುವ ಸಮಾಜದ ಬೆರಿಸಾಯೊ ತಿಕ್ಕಂದೆ ಕುಲ್ಲಂದ್.

'ಲೋಕೊಗೇ ಎಡ್ಡೆ ಆವಾಡ್'

ಉಮಾನಾಥ ಎ. ಕೋಟ್ಯಾನ್

ಗುರ್ಕಾರ್, ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ತುಳು ಸಾಹಿತ್ಯ ಅಕಾಡೆಮಿ

MAYANDAL

Folk Deity of Women's Concerns

Tulu Original : Mayandal By

Yashawanthi S. Suvarna

Translation into English By

SHANKAR NARAYANA DOOJA POOJARY

(SND Poojary)

MAYANDAL -*Folk Deity of Women's Concerns* :
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MAYANDAL in Tulu.

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Foreword

I highly congratulate Yashawanthi S. Suvarna, the author of the original Tulu text on Mayandal and the translator SND Poojary on their efforts to introduce the story of one of the cultural heroes of Tulunadu, Mayandal (originally Mani Bale) to the regional readers and to the English knowing world. It is an effort in the right direction to achieve a greater degree of familiarity with the world of knowledge and scholarship.

The legend of Mayandal, one of the female deities of Tulunadu, makes an engaging reading. It is a typical folk legend with the characteristic supernatural aura, where characters are endowed with superhuman abilities to punishing the wicked, rewarding the virtuous, protecting the children and ensuring the health and welfare of the devotees. With the aura of divinity attached to them they are worshipped as deities by the people. They belong to the wider pantheon of the folk deities, which includes deceased ancestors and martyred heroes and heroines.

A legend is essentially a narrative. But in addition to the supernatural elements, it has the features of a story: for instance a plot which is made up of several incidents which have an organic relationship between them. At the centre of the plot is a conflict or several conflicts which get complicated in the course of its development but ultimately get resolved, temporarily or permanently. Ultimately we look forward to justice by way of punishment for the wicked or the establishment of the righteous people at the proper position of responsibility. In a folk legend we may even see the deification of the victim of injustice in the work-a-day world as a deity to be worshipped eventually.

Behind this simplistic overtone there are hard facts and tragic implications. It seems as if the legends are a defense mechanism developed in the folk consciousness in order to deal with the harsh realities of the world.

In the real world there is a lot of injustice. The culprits often escape. There is no rational relationship between the efforts of the people and their rewards. The wicked prosper and the virtuous suffer. The weak are exploited by the powerful. The working classes are often exploited. For the sake of fulfilling the ambitions of the moneyed or influential people the interests of the common people are often sacrificed.

How does the popular mind cope with this? It is by getting into a world of fantasy which is ideal and where justice rules. And characters of this fantasy world often interact with people in the real word and apparently rectify the situation brought about by accidents, actions or rather misdeeds of the real world.

The border between the real world and the fantasy world is very thin. In fact the fantasy world is not conceived as fantasy. It is just the extension of the real world. In a folk legend there is generally a hero or a heroine, who vanishes and

is transported to the world of Maya or illusion. He continues to exist, though not in flesh and blood, but in spirit. Apparently he gains the ability to communicate with others who have been transported to the world of this illusion and they retain their powers to communicate with living people, often by manifesting themselves in their body. This is slightly at variance with the other belief that the souls of the dead are born again. They may undergo cycles of births and rebirths. In the folk tradition that is represented in this legend the individuals do not die but disappear and exist no longer in flesh and blood, but in spirit. In the world of illusion a different dispensation is expected, if not experienced. The very victim of injustice in the real world becomes the dispenser of justice in the world of illusion. He punishes oppressors responsible for the disappearance and transportation into the world of illusion. In fact this expression disappearing and getting transported into the world of illusion is a euphemism for getting sacrificed, killed or persecuted.

The legend of Mayandal shows these features clearly. Naga Baida refuses to contribute to the festival of Jumadi to be organized by the ruling Pangu Bannara and thus offends Jumadi. As a result of this Naga Baida's niece, Mani Bale (who later becomes Mayandal and acquires supernatural powers in her own right), is taken to the world of illusion by Jumadi. Significantly Jumadi acts as an assistant of Pangu Bannara and through Jumadi,Pangu Bannara gets Naga Baida punished. (Of course he offended him too by refusing to contribute to his worship).

In her existence as an inhabitant of the world of illusion Mayandal interacts, for instance, with the high caste women in the real world and punishes them for their unjustified haughtiness. She also comes into contact with Koti and Chnennayain the world of illusion (maya) and joins their band and receives, like them, worship from devotees.

But interestingly in this world of illusion too, the laws of justice don't seem to operate differently. Mani Bale as Mayandal punishes Pangu Bannara, who got Naga Baida punished through Jumadi by getting Bannara'sniece transported into the world of illusion, by getting Pangu Bannara'sniece drowned in the pond. Someone else has to pay for the wrong of Pangu Bannara, here his niece.

The story is interesting also because it gives us an idea of the society which existed a few centuries ago, and exists even now. The social customs, ritual practices, belief systems, the close affinity among the members of the same community and at the same time the ill-feelings, rivalries, the demand for retributive justice are presented before us quite graphically.

Udupi **Dr. N. Thirumaleshwar Bhat**

9 – 4 – 2013

Translator's Note...

I

MAYANDAL - *Folk Deity of Women's Concerns* is the English rendering of Yashawanthi Suvarna's book in Tulu, Mayandal (1998). It is a small book, essentially meant for children, and was published by the Karnataka Tulu Sahitya Academy, under the series, *Jokulegad Tulu kathekulu* (Tulu Stories for Children).

Yashawanthi Suvarna has written two versions of Mayandal -- one in Tulu referred to above, and the other in Kannada (2007), published by the same publisher. The Kannada version is the translation of the Tulu original. Except for minor changes, both are identical in content. However, the Tulu version has typical Tulu expressions; and hence, I have opted for the Tulu version for translation.

I have translated only the story component from her book; Yashawanthi Suvarna describes the personal background that led to the story of Mayandal being told by the famous *Bhūta* performer, Tabura; I have not included this part in the translation.

II

It was Professor Peter J. Claus, who was the first scholar to document and write about the Mayandal legend. His monograph, Mayandala: A Legend and Possession Cult of Tulunad (1979) is a masterpiece on Tulu folklore. He has translated the Mayandala *pāḍdana* - two hundred and ten lines - into English verse and has given detailed explanation for each line of the *pāḍdana*.

However, we should not think that the Mayandal legend is a new legend. The book on the Tulu folk deities by A. C. Burnell, (the first book of the kind, then), *The Devil Worship of the Tuluvas*, posthumously published by

his friend, Major R. C. Temple as a series of articles in the Journal of Oriental Research, The Indian Antiquary (1894 -7) gives a list of 133 folk deities worshipped by the Tuluvas; and Mayandal figures as the 87th folk deity in the alphabetically listed names of the principal *Bhūtas* (folk deities) included in the text. The list was furnished by Rev. A. Manner of the Basel Mission, Mangalore. The book just mentions Mayandal as one of the folk deities, but it does not contain either the Mayandal *pāḍdana*, or the story of Mayandal.

However, the book does carry three detailed prose versions of the Koti Chennaya legend, in translation.

The purpose of mentioning the Koti Chennaya legend in this context is, there is a close relationship between the Koti Chennaya legend and the Mayandal legend. In most of the temples of Koti Chennaya [*garodi* (s)], Mayandal is worshipped within the *garodi* complex, and her annual festival is organized after the annual *nēma* festival of Koti Chennaya. Mayandal and Koti Chennaya, it is believed, met after their death, in the realm of illusion (māya). She is the 'caste-sister' (Peter Claus) of Koti Chennaya, and their real sister is Kinnidaru. Therefore, Mayandal - Mani Bale -receives worship, along with Koti Chennaya.

III

I witnessed the annual festival of Mayandal on 14th March, 2010 at Pettaje, Nakre, Karkala taluk (after many years) and clicked a few photos of the festival, some of which are included in the text. Incidentally, the temple of Mayandal (*Mayandale Sāna*, Tulu / *Sthāna*, Sanskrit) in Nakre is located at Pettaje, some three kilometres away form the Nakre Garodi. The Billava household of Pettaje looks after the Mayandal temple under the management of the Hegde family of Maniyottu Guttu, Nakre. Generally the Mayandal is worshipped within a garodi complex; however, the Mayandal temple in Nakre is an exception.

Mayandal is the folk deity of women's concerns: She is believed to grant boon for a progeny, protect the expectant mother during her childbirth and safeguard the health and well-being of the mother and her baby after the childbirth. Once upon a time, when the medical facilities were not available, to protect them, their crops and cattle the people of Tulunadu offered prayer to their folk deities and pledged offerings to them; and women in

particular, invoked Mayandal and made offerings to her to tide over their problems. Now healthcare facilities have vastly improved; however, belief in Mayandal has not decreased; and in fact, there is an increase in the number of devotees who worship her. A large number of worshippers, especially women, irrespective of caste and class, come to witness the annual festival of Mayandal and make offerings -- silk red cloth pieces (*patte*), red silk saris, icons of cradle and the baby, and cash. In the past, devotees used to offer palm umbrellas. Holding a palm umbrella in one hand is one of the identifying features of a Mayandal statue.

IV

The Mayandal legend is increasingly becoming popular in the villages and towns of modern day Tulunadu.

I have prepared a short glossary of certain terms that appear in the text. Some of the entries in the glossary are, in fact, notes. The glossary would help the English readers to appreciate the Mayandal legend within the sphere of Tulu folklore.

I have not used the diacritic signs in the main body of the text, and in the end of the text, I have listed the transliterated names.

I am grateful to Yashawanti Suvarna for requesting me to translate some of her books into English, and the present one is the second in the series.

I express my sincere thanks to Dr. N. Thirumaleshwar Bhat, Retired Professor of English, M.G. M. College Udupi. He went through the draft of the book and made valuable suggestions.

I express my gratitude to the Karnataka Tulu Sahitya Academy for publishing this work.

Miramar
Goa 3-4-2013

SND Poojary

KEY TO TRANSLITERATION

Roman symbols		Nearest English equivalent wherever available
a		u of cut
aa	ā	a of calm
i		i of bit
ii	ī	ee of keep
u		u of put
uu	ū	oo of shoot
e		e of bet
ee	ē	a of mate
ɛ		a of match
o		o of obedient
oo	ō	oa of coat
c		ch of chair
ṭ		t of heat
ḍ		d of dark
t		th of birth
d		th of though
l		I of light
ḷ		with the tip of the tongue curled back
ś		sh of sheep
s		s of see
ṣ		

MAYANDAL

Folk Deity of Women's Concerns

I

Mani Bale

In Tulunadu, once upon a time, there were many heroes and heroines. They did a lot of good things for the people. They fought against injustice; and upheld truth, righteousness and justice. They have become the guiding stars for all of us. The names of such great persons have remained in the annals of our history. One such great soul is Mayandal.

In the Gudde Mudandala Patt of the eastern part of Tulunadu, there was a person by name, Naga Baida. Everybody liked him. He was very rich; he had many servants; and he resided in a palatial house - *Guttu Barke*.

Naga Baida had a niece. She was very good looking. Affectionately, he called her Mani Bale.

Mani Bale grew up fast. Naga Baida thought of arranging for her marriage.

Her Marriage

There was one Raja Baida at Poyya Mudipala Barke. He was also a wealthy person. He possessed vast stretches of paddy fields, granary-full of paddies and pulses, and gold and silver that could be

measured in *kalase*(s). However, he was a bit depressed as there was not a single maiden in his palace, even to light the daily lamp.

Raja Baida had a beloved son, Balanatha. Raja Baida wanted to arrange the marriage of his son with a beautiful maiden. He sent for four of his immidiate neighbours and four of his far away neighbours. He expressed his intention and told them,

'I want to arrange for the marriage of my son. Please find a suitable bride for him. She should be beautiful and come from a good family.'

The gathered persons replied,

'O Raja Baida, we will look for a suitable bride for your son; you need not worry on that score.'

Thus, these eight persons went in search of a bride for Balanatha. They searched everywhere and finally came to Naga Baida of Gudde Mudandala Patt. From a distance, Naga Baida saw the guests coming to his house. He instructed his servants to fill water in the stone bailing bucket kept under the red-shaded coconut palm. He told them to keep a bronze pot in the bucket.

The guests washed off the dust from their feet and the sweat from their faces. Then Naga Baida requested them to rest on the screw pine mats rolled out on the southern veranda of the house. He asked the guests news about their village and news from the neighbouring villages; and enquired about the purpose of their visit.

The guests asked,

'Do you have bullocks to be sold to a far off place, and a maiden to be given in marriage to a nearby place?'

The host replied,

'The bullocks to be sold, we have sold them in the Besa - Kartel

months; the maiden to be given in marriage to a nearby place, we have arranged her marriage in the *Suggi Paggu* months. However, we have a maiden; she is of very tender age. She plays cooking the whole day along with the children of the neighbourhood -- preparing rice of sand and curry of stones.'

The guests responded,

'If that is so, it suits us well; even our boy is of a tender age. He has just developed tender moustache and facial hair on his smiling face.'

'In that case, why should we delay? You see the girl, and then let us fix the day for the marriage,' said Naga Baida. He instructed his niece to bring a pot of water and give it to the guests.

The guests liked the girl, and agreed to arrange for the marriage of their boy with the niece of Naga Baida. To get the horoscopes of the boy and the girl compared, the guests and the host went to an astrologer. He read the horoscopes and told them that the horoscopes matched well and suggested that they could go ahead with the marriage. Then, they fixed the day for the marriage.

Presenting a sheaf of betel leaves and an areca nut (*vilya*), Naga Baida requested the guests to bring the bridegroom from the Poyya Mudipala Barke to the Gudde Mudandala house (Naga Baida's house) in a bridal procession. With this request, he saw the guests off.

When Raja Baida saw his people returning with the betel leaves and the areca nut, he was very much pleased. He understood that they had found a girl for his son. He started making arrangements for a grand wedding for his son.

On the fifth of the month, at dawn, the marriage procession of the groom started off as a great spectacle - with the blowing of the

musical pipes, playing of the percussion instruments and the bursting of fireworks. The procession reached the front field of the Gudde house. The caste heads (*gurkarlu*), accompanied by the bedecked women carrying with them a mirror and a sacred pot (*kalasa*) went to welcome the marriage procession. By way of welcome rice grains were splattered on the groom and the members of the marriage procession. Then the marriage party was ushered into the marriage pandal.

The caste heads of the bride's side and those of the groom's side, met. The bride wore a silk sari and was bedecked with -- a golden band around her waist; a golden ornament on the middle of her crown; round golden pendants on her plaited hair; golden arm bands around her arms; golden chains around her hands and anklets with tiny bells around her ankles. She was adorned with areca flower and other flowers. After elaborately decorating her, the *muttayide* women led the bride to the marriage seat kept in the marriage pandal.

The bridegroom, Balanatha, sported an embroidered turban, put on *kacce* of superior white cloth and wore a waistband. Holding a white umbrella over his head, he was led to the seat of marriage. Walking step by step on the red carpet, he proceeded to the wedding seat.

With the pouring of holy water on the palms of the bride and bridegroom from a sacred bronze pot, Mani Bale was given in marriage to Balanatha. The guests were very happy to see the glittering couple. There was a sumptuous feast with various edibles and the customary sweet dish. Everybody ate their stomach-full. People commented that they had not witnessed such a wedding till then.

Naga Baida felt very sad at the time of sending his niece to her husband's house. Placing his hand on her head, he blessed her,

'Be the eternal flame of both the families - the family to which you were born and also to the family to which you will now enter as its member.'

She touched the feet of her uncle, and cried, inconsolably. The guests who witnessed the scene also felt like crying.

The marriage procession returned to the Poyya Mudipala Barke. Before entering the house, her father-in-law advised Mani Bale,

'O my dear, putting your right foot first, enter the house, and then, light the lamp that has been kept inside.'

Mani Bale did as instructed by her father-in-law. She lived happily in her husband's house. Everybody liked her. She became the darling wife of her husband.

Her Conception

Six years passed after her marriage. The couple did not get a child. Therefore, they were depressed. They felt,

'Of what use are these riches when we do not hear the laughter of a child -- the child that calls out our names and dances around merrily in the house? We are like a banana plant that does not yield a bunch of fruit, or a tree that does not bloom.'

One day Mani Bale went to the Maddela Parapu pond to take bath. She carried a fistful of white rice in the end of her sari. She washed her clothes on the Pavura rock. She descended to the deep, Bermer pond of Kempu Gudde (Red Hill), situated at Kemmade Karya. After reaching the middle of the pond, folding her hands, she offered prayer to the folk deity, Bermer,

'O Bermer, I have followed the path of truthfulness. Kindly fulfill the wish of my husband for a progeny. Please grant me a boon of a child.'

She removed the rice from the end of her sari and dropped the grains into the pond for the fish to eat. The fish swallowed the rice grains with a great flourish. She was pleased at that. She felt something extraordinary happening to her. She was elated. Out of happiness, she dipped in the Bermer pond once again, and went home with a pleasant feeling.

A few months passed by. It came to be known that Mani Bale was pregnant. Balanatha Baida -- her husband -- was very much delighted.

When she was in her seventh month of pregnancy, Raja Baida called his son and told him,

'For Mani Bale, a grand pregnancy ceremony must be arranged.'

Balanatha Baida started making preparations for the pregnancy ceremony. From the Mudpare Kudala market, he procured a set of garlands of jasmine flowers and from the Bantwala market, a thousand varieties of edibles.

Adorned gorgeously the expectant mother was seated in the vast picturesque, front hall of the house. A top section banana leaf was obtained from a banana plant that leaned to the north, and the leaf was placed in front of her. She was served - pickle kept in chinaware, curry made from the tender bamboo shoots, and a thousand kinds of eatables. She was served so much milk that it flowed out from the leaf on which she was eating; and so much clarified butter that it submerged her palm. Similarly the guests were served the sweet dish, *paramanna* and five other types of dishes.

After she took her meal, she was made to board a palanquin. To provide shade, a piece silk cloth was spread over the palanquin. As the palanquin proceeded, she was fanned with a *chowric*. Thus, she was sent from her husband's house to the house of her uncle, at Gudde Barke.

Her Childbirth

When she was heavily pregnant, she developed labour pains. She experienced burning sensation on the soles of her feet; her face became lusterless.

Naga Baida called, Bomme Madira, the midwife. He offered prayer to the family deity. He prepared a kind of oil from the, *perolu-siddolu* (a variety of medicinal) herbs, and gave it to the midwife. She applied the oil on the expectant mother.

Soon thereafter, Mani Bale gave birth to a handsome baby boy. As a practice, a bell was rung to drive away fear from the newborn. Giving him a bath, the neonate (new born) was placed beside the mother.

II

Pangu Bannara

In the same region where Naga Baida resided, there was a Manor House (*Budu*), called Gudde Mudandala Bhatta. Pangu Bannara was the ruler - Ballal - of the region. He dismantaled his earlier Manor House and in its place built a new one. Jumadi was the family deity of the Ballal. The Ballal made a new cross-legged bedstead for the folk deity.

Kola Festival of Jumadi

On the occasion of re-installing the folk deity Jumadi in the veranda of the new Manor House, he thought of organizing a *kola* festival of the folk deity. With this in mind, he called eight children from the neighbourhood and instructed them,

'I have to organize the *kola* festival of the folk deity, Jumadi of

the Manor House. For organizing the festival, I need tender coconut fronds and tender coconuts; you go to the village and collect tender coconuts and tender coconut fronds from the people of the village.'

The children went to every household, without missing any *(jattina bakil, kattina ill)*. All except Naga Baida of the Gudde house gave tender coconuts and coconut fronds.

Naga Baidas Refuses to give Tithe (tithe = contribution)

The children called out Naga Baida, thrice. He responded to the last call and came out of the house and asked,

'Who is calling?'

The children replied,

'We are the children sent by Pangu Bannara. He is organizing the kola festival of the folk deity, Jumadi of the Manor House, and you have been told to give a tender coconut and a young coconut frond for the purpose.'

'Give him a tender coconut frond and a tender coconut! My coconut frond is not the shoot of a screw pine plant and my tender coconut is not the fruit of the poison-nut (strychnine) tree. I have never known till now that people establish, in a Manor House, some wild spirit from the jungle. My niece has delivered; and the pollution days are not over yet. These are the pollution days for us, I will not give the tender coconut frond and the tender coconut as demanded by the Ballal. You inform him accordingly,' replied Naga Baida.

The children went and conveyed to the Ballal what Naga Baida had said. Bannara felt hurt, and remarked,

'If he does not give the tender coconut frond and the tender coconut, does not matter. Let us see whether the folk deity, Jumadi himself would get these things from Naga Baida's house.'

The day for the *kola* festival was fixed. The *kola* performer, Ramu was called. He was ceremoniously offered betel leaves along with an areca nut and oil, as a part of the ritual requesting him to impersonate the folk deity. After the ceremonial bath, Ramu impersonated the folk deity and sang the *paddana* narrating the birth, wanderings and the exploits of the folk deity. Holding the small ceremonial umbrella attached to a long pole, and then, wearing the mask of the folk deity, there was circumambulation of Jumadi around the shrine of Jumadi. When the *kola* festival was going on in pomp and show, Jumadi, using his supernatural power, created a warrior servant. He made the warrior attendant put on the appearance of Pangu Bannara and sent him to the house of Naga Baida.

Jumadi-attendant as Pangu Bannara

It was past midnight. The warrior attendant, impersonating as Pangu Bannara, came to the house of Naga Baida. Everybody was in deep sleep in Naga Baida's house. The maids of the puerperal mother were sleeping here and there in her room. The Jumadi attendant-in-disguise called out the name of Naga Baida. Nobody from the veranda of the house seemed to respond to the call.

Mani Bale heard the voice. She wondered who could be calling in that midnight hour. When she heard the call for the third time, she responded with, 'Ooo'. She got up from the mat on which she was sleeping. She took with her the small shining sickle and holding the palm umbrella, opened the door. She kept her hand on the door frame, looked out, and asked who was calling.

She was surprised to see Pangu Bannara. She asked,

'O Pangu Bannara, why have you come at this midnight hour?'

'O Mani Bale, I have a bad habit; I smoke *bangi* (*ganja*, *Cannabis sativa*). I need a piece of burning charcoal to light my *bangi* ; please

give me a piece of charcoal,' said the warrior- attendant in the garb of Pangu Bannara.

'In that case there are eight maids who have been assigned by my uncle to take care of me, I shall wake them up to give you the charcoal,' said Mani Bale.

'After a day's hard work of attending to your chores, tired, they are sleeping. Let them enjoy their hard-earned sleep; do not wake them up. You give me the charcoal,' replied the attendant-spirit impersonating as Pangu Bannara.

Mani Bale and her Son enter the Realm of Illusion

Mani Bale, who had just completed three days of birth pollution, trusted the words of the attendant spirit-in-disguise. Remaining inside the doorsill of her house, extending her hand, she sought to give the burning charcoal. The spirit-in-disguise pulled her out, by her extended hand, and made her disappear into the 'realm of illusion' (*māya*).

As she entered the world of invisibility, the folk deity Jumadi said to her,

'For your uncle, one tender coconut frond and one tender coconut are more important than anything else. He called me a wild spirit of the jungle. I am not the wild spirit of the jungle; I am, in fact, a folk deity (*daiva*),' saying this, the Jumadi revealed his real identity.

Mani Bale was anguished. Reprimanding Jumadi, she pleaded with the spirit,

'O Jumadi, you have deceived me. Since I did not get a child, I was depressed. The folk deity Bermer granted me the boon of a progeny. As a result, I gave birth to a good looking baby boy. You have deprived me of the good fortune of looking after him. You

take revenge upon my uncle by punishing me, For the sake of one young coconut frond and one tender coconut, my uncle has given me away to you. Let it be so. My loving baby is in the cradle, kindly bring him and leave him under my care.'

'O Mani Bale, do not worry; I shall bring your baby and give him into your hands.' Thus the spirit consoled the distressed Mani Bale.

The spirit Jumadi went near the room situated on the southern wing of the veranda of the house. He put his hands through the window of the room and pulled the cradle near him. In the process, the cradle dashed against the wooden frame of the door and the right arm of the baby, broke. Because of the pain of the broken arm, the baby cried loudly. Naga Baida heard the agonizing cry of the baby. He got up abruptly from his sleep. He called out, 'Mani, Mani.' He went towards the room of the new mother. By this time, the spirit had taken out the baby with cradle and handed over the cradle and the baby to Mani Bale. When he reached the room, he found the room empty; and Mani Bale and her baby were nowhere in sight. He cried in distress.

Just then he heard the voice of his invisible niece. It said,

'O my uncle, why are you calling me now? Why are you so tormented? You were not prepared to give just one coconut frond and one tender coconut from such a vast landholding of yours, were you? You have gifted me away to the folk deity, Jumadi. You cannot see me; I am no longer in the physical form; and I have entered the realm of illusion. Do not think about me. However, I shall see that Pangu Bannara suffers as much as he made you suffer. I believed his words. Even though I was a new mother, I woke up and gave him a piece of charcoal to light his bangi. As a result, I have been reduced into this condition. The folk deity Jumadi has deceived

me. 'O my dear uncle, now you do not think about me; and control yourself.' As she moved further and further, her voice became fainter and fainter, and finally it was dissolved in the stillness of the darkness.

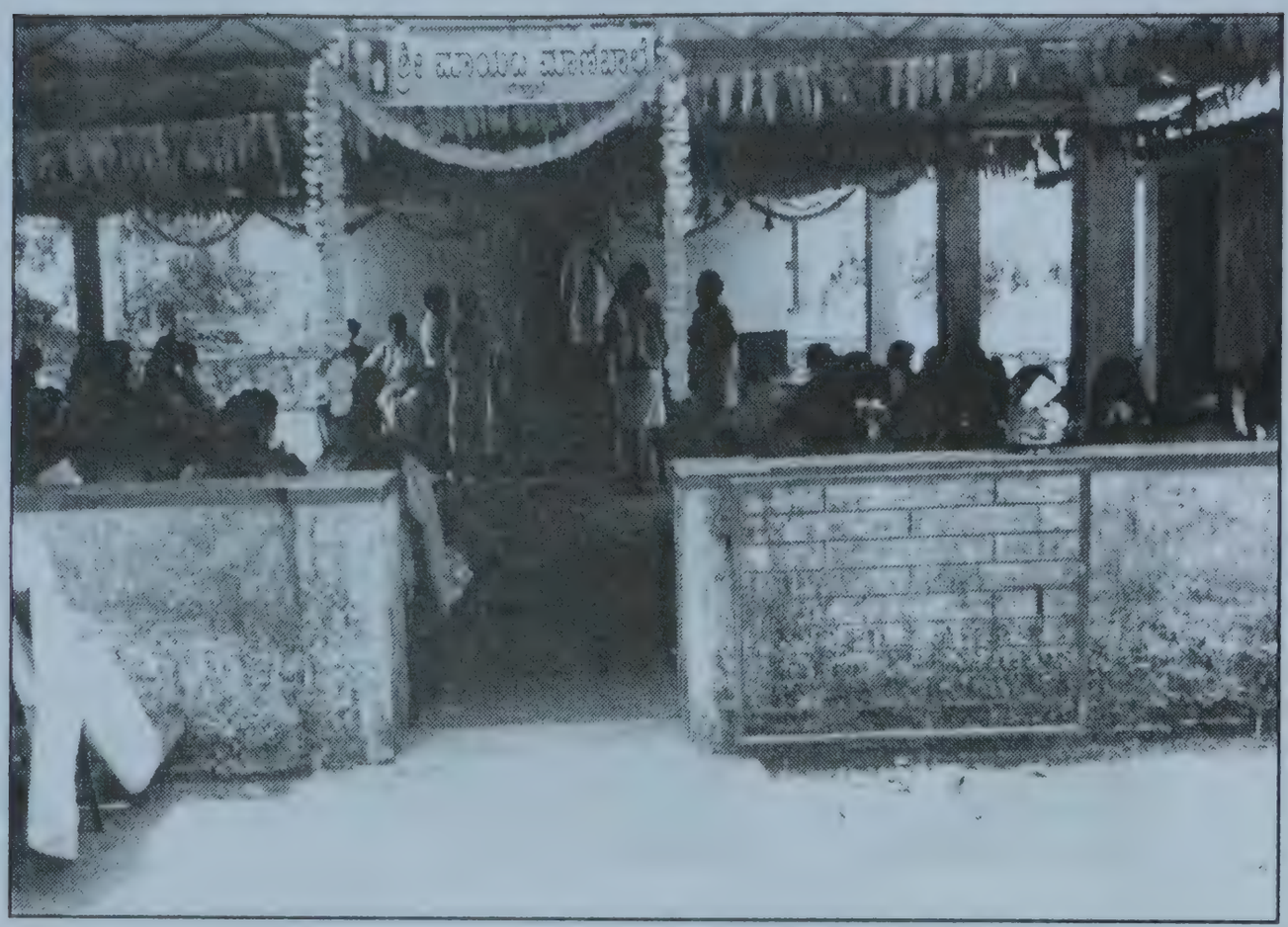
Naga Baida realized his mistake. He felt sorry that because of his inprudent behaviour, his beloved niece had to face this kind of fate. Out of profound sorrow of losing his niece, he went and slept on the stone trunk of his house, and cried.

Mani Bale becomes *Mayandal* and takes Revenge on Pangu Bannara

The invisible Mani Bale (*Mayanda Manibale*) laid the cradle with the baby in the hands of the warrior-attendant. Together with Jumadi, they came to the veranda of the Manor House of Pangu Bannara. When they reached his Manor House, the *kola* festival was still going on. The spirit Jumadi was offered tender coconuts and he was given milk milched from a brown cow. There was circumambulation of the spirit and then the festival ended. The ritual objects (bandara) of the folk deity were ceremoniously taken back to the place where they were normally kept.

On the next day, at daybreak, Mani Bale induced the beloved niece of Bannara to come along with her to a pond for bath. After the bath, when the niece of Bannara was returning, Mani Bale pushed her into the pond. The niece of Bannara was drowned. Thus, Mani Bale avenged the wrong done to her. After this event, Mani Bale came to be called, *Mayandal* – Mani Bale who had entered the realm of illusion.

The spirit of Bannara's niece joined the ranks of the invisible Mani Bale. Mayandal, her son, the niece of Bannara, Jumadi and the warrior-attendant of Jumadi went on a journey to the different



The Mayandal Sana / Sthana (temple) at Pettaje, Nakre

The statues of Mayandal and her son : Pettaje Mayandal Temple

The possessed Mayandal Impersonator coming out of the Mayandal temple : Pettaje Mayandal Temple

The possessed Mayandal Impersonator in the countryard of the Mayandal temple : Pettaje

parts of Tulunadu. As they went along, they upheld truthfulness and established righteousness.

In the meanwhile, Mayandal felt that she was impure since she had not completed the normal days of birth pollution of her childbirth. She entered the realm of illusion when she had hardly completed three days of birth pollution. She wanted to purify herself and free herself of the feeling of impurity. Therefore, she wanted to take a holy dip in the river Ganges.

Mayandal and Muggertti

Mayandal made the warrior-attendant carry the cradle; and she carried Madumaran -- her baby. Accompanied by Jumadi, she went for a holy dip. When they reached the bathing ghat of Ullal, they met a woman of the Muggera community -- a Muggertti -- collecting shell fish. She recognized Mayandal and asked her,

'Where are you going?'

Mayandal did not appreciate the fact that Muggertti (Mugetti) recognized her. She thought that Muggertti would go and report to her uncle (Naga Baida) about seeing her at Ullal. She did not want this to happen. Therefore, she took out a few grains of white rice that she carried, and reciting some magical incantation, splattered the rice on Muggertti (and made her enter the realm of illusion). Then, she gave the cradle to Muggertti to carry.

They reached the plain grassland of Karya Kadanttala Kadra. Mayandal hung the cradle from the branches of a banyan tree. She breastfed the baby and put the baby in the cradle. She sang an invocation to God Narayana and rocked the cradle.

Mayandal and the five High Caste Women

As she was singing, five women passed by the banyan tree. They asked,

'Who is that singing the song of the higher castes and rocking the cradle?'

'Do not say, "Upper" and "lower" castes. We are all one in the eyes of God. Talk to me with respect, O women,' said Mayandal, in anger.

The women, however, were adamant; they did not heed to the advice of Mayandal. They retorted angrily,

'Do not preach us what is right and what is wrong. Stop singing the song that can be sung only by the higher castes.'

Mayandal was very angry. She cursed them and turned them into stones. They paid for their arrogance. She continued her journey.

Mayandal meets Koti Chennaya

She traversed through the hills and the forests. She heard the chirping of the birds; saw the beauty of the galloping deer, and the elegance of the floating clouds. On the way, she feasted on the beauty of nature. Happily, she traveled a long distance.

Near the river Ganges, there was a ferocious demon. He used to trouble those who came to bathe in the river. The warrior heroes of Tulunadu, Koti Chennaya came to bathe in the river Ganges. The demon did not allow them to take bath. They fought with the demon and killed him. Then they bathed in the holy river and sanctified themselves. After the bath, they carried the holy water of the river Ganges in a sacred pot and then started on their return journey.

On the way, they met Mayandal, who was going to the river Ganges. Surprised, they quizzed her,

'You are a young woman; where are you going alone? Who are you? Where are you from? Treat us as your elder brothers, and tell us about yourself.'

Looking at their robust physique and mesmerized by their dazzling look, she developed a sense of devotion towards Koti Chennaya. She narrated her tragic story,

'I am the beloved niece of Naga Baida, and the loving wife of Balanatha of the Poyya Mudipalla Barke. For a long time, I did not get a child. Because of the boon of Bermer, I gave birth to a baby boy. Only three days had passed since my delivery, when, the folk deity, Jumadi, impersonating as Pangu Bannara came to my house in the middle of the night. He asked for a piece of charcoal to light his bangi. I could not see through his disguise. I got up from my sleep and came to offer him the charcoal. Because my uncle had refused to give a young coconut frond and a tender coconut for the kola festival of Jumadi organized by Bannara, Jumadi caused me to disappear and enter the realm of illusion.'

'Since then I have been wandering in an invisible state. I have not completed the pollution days of my childbirth. I feel impure and sullied. Therefore, I want to take a dip in the holy waters of the river Ganges and purify myself. This is the reason for my presence here.' She fell at the feet of Koti Chennaya.

They lifted her and made her get up. Giving her words of assurance, they said,

'Henceforth, we treat you like our beloved sister. Since you are alone and that too, you are a woman, you need not undertake such an arduous journey for a holy bath; we have brought with us a pot of holy water from the river Ganges; and you could sanctify yourself with this water.'

They gave the pot of holy water to Mayandal. She took bath, sprinkled holy water on her from the water vessel and thereby purified herself. The feeling of being impure was thus removed from her mind and she felt happy.

Thus sanctified, Mayandal, along with Koti Chennaya, journeyed through the length and breadth of Tulunadu. In the south of Tulunadu, she visited the kings of Shirva, Mattar, Bola and Katpadi; in the north, crossing the river at the border, she met the king Sooda of Perdur. Where there was injustice, she established justice; where there was falsehood, she enforced truthfulness and where there was unrighteousness, she sought to uphold righteousness. Thus, she came to be known as the Goddess of Righteousness (*Dharma Devate*).

Koti Chennaya granted Mayandal the boon to the effect that she would receive worship along with them. Therefore, in most of the shrines of Koti Chennaya [*garodi* (s)], she is worshipped in the main shrine of the *garodi* complex, or worshipped in an independent shrine, within the complex. However, in one instance, i.e. in the case of Nakre garodi, her shrine is located away from the *garodi*, at Pettaje, some three kilometers from the *garodi*. The annual festival (*kola* / nema) of Mayandal takes place wherever she is worshipped.

People of Tulunadu worship Mayandal as the Goddess of Fertility -- the Goddess who protects women at childbirth, protects new mothers and their babies. Mayandal is also the Goddess of Wealth and Prosperity.

The story of the life and tragedy of Mayandal is firmly rooted in the consciousness of the people of Tuḷunāḍu, and she is worshipped with deep a sense of devotion all over Tulunadu.

Glossary / Notes

Ballāḷ - the title given to a revenue collector / provincial head in the traditional political system of Tuḷunāḍu. He was a petty king / feudal lord / big landlord. His residence was called, Bīḍu/Būḍu (Manor House).

Baida (Tuḷu), Vaidya (Sanskrit) -- refers to the practitioners of native (folk) medicine in the traditional Tuḷunāḍu; since the members of the Billava community dispensed folk medicine, they were / are called by the name, *Baida*.

banḍāra -- refers to the ritual objects of a folk deity -- icons, weapons, ornaments, masks, bronze water pots etc.

Bermer (Tuḷu), Brahma (Sanskrit) - one of the powerful folk deities worshipped by the Tuḷuvas; he is viewed as the presiding deity of all the folk divinities of the Tuḷuvas; he is also called, Nāgabermer; he is not the Vedic Brahma of the mainstream Hinduism, but an independent, Tuḷuva Brahma; and he was the family deity of Kōṭi Cennaya.

Bēsa - Kārtel/Suggi - Paggu - names of the Tuḷu months; *Bēsa,* May - June; *Kārtel*, June - July; *Suggi,* March - April and *Paggu*, April - May.

Būḍu -- the residence of a Ballāḷ, a Manor House.

chowrie -- a fan made from the hair the yak animal. The hairs are tied into a bunch with a metal ring; and another ring is attached to the metal ring. The second ring can be put around a finger to fan the *chowrie*; *chowrie* is used as a ritual object in the worship of folk deities.

garoḍi -- originally a gymnasium imparting training in martial art and combat skills; since Kōti Cennaya were trained as warriors in such gymnasia, their temples came to be called *garoḍi* (s).

gurikāre / gurkāre - the caste head / caste leader of certain Tuluva communities, for example, the Billava community. (Now, the term is used to refer to chairman / president of a function.) In the traditional Tuḷunāḍu, there were hereditary headmen. They belonged to certain households. These households were designated

as, the First House, the Second House and so on. The heads of these households functioned as the headmen of the caste. They enjoyed enormous power in the traditional Tuḷuva society; no social function in the caste could be held without inviting them and without their presence.

Guttu Barke -- a prominent Billava household in the traditional Tuḷunāḍu; the head of a *Guttu Barke* also functioned as the caste head -- gurkāre -- of the community.

Jumādi (Tuḷu) / Dhūmāvati (Sanskrit) -- one of the folk deities (*daiva / bhūta*) worshipped by the Tuḷuvas; the deity is supposed to be androgynous - possessing both male and female characteristics; the deity is addressed in masculine gender and the folk artiste impersonating the deity in a *kōla / nēma* festival is a male performer.

kacce - a mode of wearing cloth, in which, the one end of the dhoti (or sari) is gathered up from behind, between the legs and tucked into the waist band.

kalaśe - a traditional measurement of grains used in the traditional Tulunadu; one *kalase* is ten and a half or fourteen seers.

kaḷasa - is a sacred water- filled (bronze) pot; on the pot, a peeled coconut is kept; on the coconut, strands of areca flower and other flowers. Installing the sacred pot is the initial ritual performed before the commencement of the actual ceremony or the ritual.

kōla -- is a night-long festival deities of the folk deities [*Bhūta* (s)] worshipped by the Tuluvas; the *kōla* festival also can be a day time celebration. The festival takes place in great pomp and show amidst elaborate festivity. There is spirit possession by the priest-impersonators and also by the professional cult or *Bhūta* performers. For the same type of festival organized for the folk deities that are supposed to be mild and gracious - for the so called Royal Deities

[*Rājan Daiva* (s)], and for the anthropomorphic deities like *Baiderlu*, *Muggerlu* etc., the term nēma is used; however, in common parlance, these terms are used as synonyms.

Kōti Cennaya -- respectfully called, *Baiderlu* or *Baider* were the twin brothers who fought against injustice meted out to them by the ruling elite of their time; and they finally met with tragic ends. They are deified and worshipped by the Tujuvas as their cultural heroes. Their temples are called - *garōḍi* (s) -- and there are more than 230 such temples spread over Tuḷunāḍu and elsewhere.

nēma - this term must have been derived from the Sanskrit term, *niyama ; niyama* refers to adherence to elaborate rules and regulations in a ritual. Therefore, the festival ritual of the Tuḷuva folk deities and divinities where a detailed ritual procedure is emphasized, as in case of the annual festival Koti and Chennaya, the term *nēma* is used. Further, the annual or the vowed festival of the so-called Royal Deities is supposed to be a *nēma* ritual. However, these terms are used as synonyms and no clear-cut distinction is made between these terms.

Māyanda Maṇi Bāle -- literally means, Maṇi Bāle, who has entered māya - the realm of illusion.

Mugger/Muger - one of the Tulu communities; the community worships Muggerlu - Eṇmūr Daiyya, his twin sister, Tannimāniga and Tannimāniga's husband, Kelatta Perna. There was some historical affinity between the Billava community and the Muger community; the annual festival of the Muger deities resembles the annual festival of Baiderlu -- Kōṭi Cennaya; in the *Mugēra pāḍḍana*, there is extensive reference to the Billava community, especially to Kōṭi Cennaya.

muttayidɛ /muttayide - a married woman whose husband is

alive, and she is regarded as auspicious and religiously fit to participate in any religious function. A widow, to a certain extent, a widower, is not considered auspicious; therefore, is not permitted to participate in religious ceremonies and rituals.

paramānna / paramana / paramāna -- is a common dish served in almost all the religious and social functions of the Tuluvas; once upon a time, the dish used to be prepared from green gram, (sometimes from rice), coconut milk (juice) and jaggery.

pāḍḍana -- is a Tulu narrative song; it tells the story of birth, wanderings and exploits of a folk deity; it is sung by the Bhuta performers at the time of a *kōla/nēma* festival; some of these religious folk songs, like the Kōti Chennaya *pāḍḍana* and the *Siri pāḍḍana* are long narratives songs; and are called, Tulu Epics.

Tuḷunāḍu -- the Tulu speaking areas of the present day Dakshina Kannada and Udupi districts of the coastal Karnataka, and the Kasargod district of the northern Kerala.

Uḷḷala -- a place near Mangalore.

vīḷya -- literally means, betel leaves; in the traditional Tuḷunāḍu (even now) a sheaf of betel leaves and an areca nut used to be given as a token of entrusting a person with certain religious responsibilities, or as gift before offering honorarium during religious functions.

Transliteration of some of the names that occur in the text

Ballāḷ / Bālanātha / Banṭwāḷa / Bōḷa / Guḍḍe Mūḍandāla Bhaṭṭa / Kaḍanttala / Kaṭpāḍi / Kemmaḍe Karya / Kempu Guḍḍɛ / Jumādi Maḍḍela / Maṇi Bālɛ / Madumāran / Maṭṭāṛ / Māyandāḷ / Muḍipāla Muḍpare Kuḍala / Nāga / Pāngu Bannāra / Pavūra / Perḍūru / Rāja Baida / Śirva / Sūḍa/ Tuḷu / Tuḷunāḍu, and Uḷḷāla

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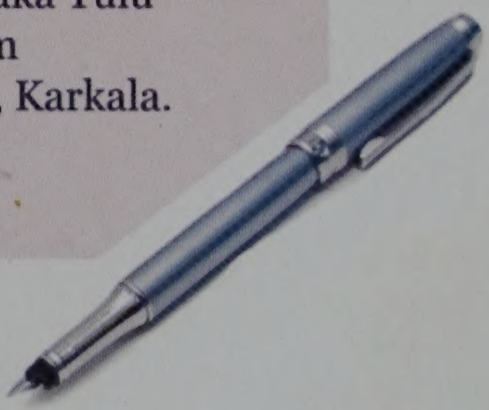
She writes in Tulu and Kannada. Her other important works are: A Hennuanayiya Atma Kathe (An Autobiography of that Female Dog, 1988), Dari (The Path, 1993), Pashchimakke Valida Surya (The Sun who Tilted Towards the West, 2002), Deyi Baideti (Tulu, 2003), Bharat Ratna Abdul Kalam (2007), Mayandal (Kannada, 2007), Ankanadolage Mahile (A collection of Articles on Women, 2007), and Golida Mara (The Banyan Tree, 2010). She periodically contributes to the monthly magazine, Akshaya, published from Mumbai. She was a member of the Karnataka Tulu Sahitya Academy. She is from Nandarabettu House, Nakre, Karkala.



About the book

The book, MAYANDAL - Folk Deity of Women's Concerns tells you a fascinating but tragic story of Mani Bale, who is worshipped as Mayandal in Tulunadu. She becomes an innocent victim of rivalry between her maternal uncle, Naga Baida and a powerful landlord of the region, Pangu Bannara. Bannara uses his folk deity, Jumādi to settle a personal score with Naga Baida. The folk deity makes Mani Bale disappear into the world of illusion, māya. But Mani Bale as Mayandal takes revenge on Bannara. Mayandal meets Koti Chennaya in the realm of illusion. This is how the Mayandal legend is linked with the Koti Chennaya legend. Mayandal is viewed as a fertility deity.

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